

TOWARD

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

IN

NOVA SCOTIA

TASK FORCE ON PRIMARY HEALTH CARE
SEPTEMBER, 1992

THE TASK FORCE ON PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

The Task Force on Primary Health Care was formed in April, 1992, in response to recommendations made by the Nova Scotia Royal Commission on Health Care. The Task Force has a mandate to identify primary health care needs in Nova Scotia and to promote a primary health care approach to the delivery of health care services. The Task Force is made up of representatives of a broad range of community and professional groups.

WHAT IS PRIMARY HEALTH CARE?

Primary health care is a different way of thinking about health and health care.

Primary health care empowers people to take charge of their own health and to take an active part in planning, policy making and delivering health services in their community. Primary health care starts with a strong foundation of community-based services which enable people to maintain and strengthen their health. Primary health care services include health education, promotion, prevention, rehabilitation, support, and treatment for illness and injury.

Primary health care addresses factors which affect health, such as poverty, literacy and the environment and is developed with the full participation of the people it serves.

IN NOVA SCOTIA PRIMARY HEALTH CARE MUST BE:

- **Local Health Care.** *Primary health care is based in the community and based on the needs of the community. It is offered as close as possible to where people live, work, learn and play and is available to everyone. Primary health care is offered in an atmosphere people can accept and in ways they can understand.*
- **Accessible Health Care.** *Primary health care is the foundation on which other health services are built. Most people first come into contact with the health care system through primary health care. Primary health care also provides follow-up or supportive care following an illness that required specialized treatment.*
- **Supportive Health Care.** *Primary health care is care that supports people's efforts to maintain or regain their health. It includes, for example, home visiting programs, mental health programs, occupational health and safety programs, palliative care, self-help groups, clinics for people with ongoing illness and services for people with disabilities.*
- **Comprehensive Health Care.** *Primary health care includes health promotion and disease and accident prevention. It also provides treatment and access to specialized care when needed.*

- 2 -

- ***Integrated Health Care.*** Primary health care understands that many things contribute to the health of a community and health of the people who make up that community. Issues like poverty, violence, abuse, unemployment, housing and the environment affect health and illness. Part of the responsibility for promotion and prevention lies in the health sector and part lies in other areas, such as education, recreation, housing and social services. Primary health care involves integration of services and cooperation among individuals and agencies from all areas that affect health.
- ***Practical Health Care.*** Primary health care uses methods that can be shown to be affordable, appropriate and effective and are acceptable to the community.
- ***Creative Health Care.*** Primary health care encourages new ideas for meeting community health needs. Teams of health care workers, different kinds of health workers, new ways of delivering care, and new kinds of services can all be part of primary health care.
- ***Flexible and Responsive Health Care.*** Primary health care recognizes and responds to the changing needs of the individual and the community.
- ***Accountable Health Care.*** Primary health care incorporates the concept of accountability at all levels. This includes individuals, all health care workers/providers, administrators, planners, policy makers, organizations, institutions and governments.
- ***YOUR Health Care.*** Primary health care is based on community participation. It is everyone's right and responsibility to contribute to the planning and implementation of health care. Individuals, families, self-help groups, community organizations, health professionals and government -- everyone in the community must work together to define community health needs and decide on the best way to meet them.

HOW DOES PRIMARY HEALTH CARE FIT INTO NOVA SCOTIA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM?

In August, 1992, the Government of Nova Scotia committed itself to work toward the achievement of health goals developed by the Nova Scotia Provincial Health Council after extensive public consultation. Primary health care offers us a way to achieve these health goals and to become active partners in our own health, the health of our community and the health of the province.

NOVA SCOTIA'S HEALTH GOALS ARE:

- **Health Promotion:** *Promote and improve the health of all Nova Scotians. While continuing to provide quality health care, we will shift our emphasis to the promotion of health and the prevention of illness, disability and premature death.*
- **Healthy Environment:** *Make Nova Scotia a safe and healthy place to live. To be healthy, we need clean air, water and soil, as well as safe places to live, work and play. We will restore, protect and develop our environments to support health.*
- **Healthy Living:** *Support the efforts of individuals, families and communities to lead healthy lives. We will support each other in our efforts to understand the factors that affect our health and take responsibility for those things we can control.*
- **Management:** *Ensure that the resources needed to support health are managed wisely and fairly. Our taxes pay for the people, programs, equipment and facilities that support health. These and other resources will be used in ways that are open, effective, efficient and accountable.*
- **Participation:** *Involve Nova Scotians in decisions affecting health. Opportunities and support must be provided for all of us to participate in making decisions about our health and the health care system. All decision makers are accountable to the public for their actions.*
- **Social Justice:** *Ensure that all Nova Scotians have the opportunity to achieve health. Poverty, unemployment, racism, illiteracy, violence, rural isolation and other issues, make it more difficult for some people to be as healthy as others. The policies we put in place must address these factors that affect our health.*

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The Task Force on Primary Health Care is just one step in the long process of changing the direction of our health care system. Much work is being done by other Task Forces, Working Groups and the Provincial Health Council. Much more work needs to be done.

In the coming months, the Task Force will:

- identify methods of assessing primary health care needs
- identify barriers to primary health care
- identify specific changes that need to be made in the way health care services are planned, funded, accessed, delivered and evaluated
- consider and recommend for funding, projects and initiatives designed to meet primary health care needs in Nova Scotia's communities.

As we begin the process of building a primary health care system, participation and involvement by individuals, groups and communities is vital. The Task Force will be consulting with as many Nova Scotians as possible as we work toward identifying and implementing the changes that will make primary health care in Nova Scotia a reality.

If you would like more information about the Task Force on Primary Health Care, or would like to receive the guidelines for primary health care proposals when they are available contact:

The Task Force on Primary Health Care
P.O. Box 488
Halifax, N.S.
B3J 2R8
(902) 424-6247